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A page from the Swedish vicar Jonas A. Nensén's (1791–1881)
notations of Sami words in northern Sweden (Uppsala University
Library, R 649, p. 34).

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phraseology in the sources. Similarly there are some minor mistakes in her text, such as dating the moving of the Finnish episcopal see from Nousis (not Röntämäki!) to Korois “in about 1220” (citation p. 197, same year given also on p. 16), when it is well-known from the sources that it took place a decade later. Obviously this and other similar mistakes are insignificant in the whole content of the book but they demonstrate that it is not easy to master the history of the whole of Scandinavia over three different centuries and with only a limited source material.

All in all, Sara Ellis Nilsson’s dissertation opens the way for new interpretations of the history of the Christianization period and the use of fragment material especially makes her book an important reference work for others interested of this important but still far too little studied field of research.

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Peter Fjågesund, *The Dream of the North. A Cultural History to 1920* (Studia Imagologica 23), Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi 2014, ISBN 9789042038370; e-ISBN 9789401210829, 573 pp.

This comprehensive book deals with the cultural history of the North, from Antiquity to the end of the First World War and is centered around three themes: *The Arctic*, as an essential part of northern identity; *The Northern Cultural Revival*, including the rediscovery of Nordic mythology and the Icelandic Sagas; and *The Changing View of Nature*, with an aesthetic of the sublime rather than of the cultivated landscape.

This “North,” a part of Western civilization, is defined as “northern or Protestant Europe, Russia and North America, together with the enormous, largely empty (that is, unpopulated) expanse to their north, i.e. the Arctic” (p. 17). Fjågesund treats this vast region as a unit and defines his approach as “macro-historical” and “macro-cultural” (p. 17).

An important assumption is a dialectical relationship between the cultural history of the North and “the South,” here defined broadly as the Mediterranean region (p. 17). A tension between north and south is found, for example, in a comparison between the Mediterranean Re-

naissance and the Northern Cultural Revival, where the latter is defined as a “rediscovery of a culture far closer to the common people” (p. 23), which he also connects to the development of modern democracy in the northern countries.

Fjågesund presents the idea that perceptions of the North, since the Reformation, have provided an important ideological basis and justification for a northern cultural and political supremacy (p. 17).

In the first of the six main chapters of the book, “Finding a Footing. The North Before 1700,” we start with the early Mediterranean view of the North as a mythical place, Thule or Hyperboria, sometimes a Utopia, sometimes filled with mythical monsters and harsh weather. Throughout the book the reader is given a view of the North drawn from an impressive array of sources, for example travel writing, historical accounts, scientific studies and literary sources. The exposé is chronologically ordered in the chapters “Preparing for Take-Off. The Early Eighteenth Century,” “The Great Watershed. 1750–1790,” “Fastening the Grip. 1790–1830,” “The Northern Heyday. 1830–1880,” “The Closing Circle. 1880–1920.”

Fjågesund’s survey provides a foundation for the exploration of the North from 1920 to the present—a comprehensive project indeed given the exponential growth of available sources. The book also serves as important background reading for an understanding of the present situation, for example, tensions between northern and southern Europe in the wake of recent economic crisis, and issues concerning nation states as foundations of identity in an era of globalization. These are just a few of the contemporary issues where “the North” could provide a rewarding object of study.

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